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ABSTRACT

Two studies were conducted among Hispanic secondary school students in Arizona to determine whether providing special reading time with a wide variety of reading materials in Spanish would affect the students' reading abilities, reading attitudes, and academic self-concepts. The studies were conducted in two Arizona high schools, one in a high income district with 22% Hispanic enrollment, and the other in a middle income area with a 25% Hispanic enrollment. The subjects in both studies were Hispanic students enrolled in remedial reading classes. Comparable Hispanic students in other remedial reading classes taught by the same teachers served as the control group. Students were tested in Spanish reading, English reading, and affective measures using a pre- and post-test design. Analyses of covariance failed to detect any significant differences in the experimental and control means, although some method-by-teacher interactions were evident on both the Spanish reading and the affective measure. The outcome of the study was peripheral to its original purpose. Classroom observation and teacher interviews revealed that U.S.-born Hispanics had little interest in and rarely made use of Spanish reading materials, but recent Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. enjoyed the materials and used them extensively. An appendix provides accounts of teacher backgrounds and observations. (Author/AMH)

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The Effects of Spanish Reading Emphasis on the English and Spanish Reading Abilities of Hispanic High School Students

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Background and Purpose

There are several recent studies which suggest that access to two languages can accelerate aspects of cognitive and academic growth (Cummings, 1977; Schon, Hopkins & Davis, 1981; Schon, Hopkins & Vojir, 1982). Moreover, there is a number of studies which seem to indicate that Sustained Silent Reading, a structured activity in which students are given a fixed period of time for the silent reading of self-selected material, may have positive effects on students' reading abilities and attitudes (Moore, Jones and Miller, 1980). The purpose of this study is to determine whether providing special reading time with a wide variety of reading materials in Spanish affects the reading abilities, reading attitudes and academic self-concepts of Hispanic high school students. It was hypothesized that a positive improvement in the students' Spanish and English reading abilities, reading attitudes and academic self-concepts would result after the students were provided the curricular opportunity, structure and Spanish reading materials.

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Program Description

As a part of the high schools' reading programs all students who obtained scores below a certain cutoff point must be enrolled in remedial reading classes for fifty-five minutes daily. Students in these classes are provided with at least fifty-five minutes of free reading time weekly.

In both the E and C classes the teachers taught English reading comprehension, vocabulary, and related reading skills. In the experimental (E) classes teachers were provided with a wide variety of newspapers, magazines, paperback and hardback books in Spanish described by Schon (1978). The materials were selected because of their high interest and wide range of readability. The teachers were instructed to encourage interested students in these classes to read the Spanish reading materials. A bilingual resource person visited the teachers of the E classes biweekly to provide guidance in the use of the materials and to monitor the particular emphasis and style of each teacher. The consistent difference between the E and C classes was the special reading material provided in Spanish to the E classes to which the E teachers were encouraged to direct interested students.

Two separate studies were conducted, each in a high school with a substantial proportion of Hispanic students. Both studies employed the same basic design, i.e., a method-by-teacher analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) in which pretests, grade level, and sex served as covariates. Both studies employed measures of Spanish and English reading abilities. In all instances these tests were corrected for chance to insure that changes in scores were not the result of chances in the number of items attempted.

An anonymous reading attitude and academic self-concept scale was also given. (Pretests and posttests were matched by using mother's maiden name for each examinee.)

Study I

The site for Study I was the Tempe Union High School District in Tempe, Arizona. The school is situated in a high-income area; 22 percent of the students attending the school are Hispanic, eighty percent of which are bussed from a low-income area. All students obtaining a grade equivalent score of approximately 6.7 or below are required to take a remedial reading class which meets for fifty-four minutes daily. Teachers were directed to provide at least twelve minutes of free reading time daily. Seventy-two percent of the students in these classes were Hispanic.

The experimentally accessible subjects for Study I were approximately 168 Hispanic students in grades nine through twelve, divided about equally between the E and C classes.

At the beginning of the school year all students took the Metropolitan Reading Test (Form JI) as a part of the schools' regular testing procedure. The Hispanic students also took a Spanish reading proficiency measure, the CTBS Español (level C) and an affective measure of reading attitudes and academic self-concepts (Schon, Hopkins & Davis, 1981; Schon, Hopkins & Vojir, 1982). The experiment continued for four months, at which time the English and Spanish reading tests and the affective measure were readministered.

It was deemed important to control the teacher variable, thus each teacher had one or more E classes and one or more C classes. E and C classes were so designated to balance time-of-day (AM/PM) and class size. The teachers included a bilingual female Hispanic, a monolingual male Anglo,

and two monolingual female Anglos. The median number of years of teaching experience was approximately seven years. The teachers reported having specialized reading training and described themselves as reading specialists.

Results

The adjusted posttest means for the three outcome measures are given in Table 1.

The findings from the ANCOVAs for these variables are given in Table 2. Only those students who took both the pretest and the corresponding posttest

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Tables 1 and 2 about here

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were employed in the analyses. The E-C differences are very small and none approached statistical significance. The only significant effect was the method-by-teacher interaction* on the affective measure which resulted from a large superiority of the C students over the E students for one teacher. There were negligible E-C differences for the other three teachers.

Table 1 Adjusted Posttest Means for Study I

	Spanish Reading Comprehension			English Reading Comprehension			Affective		
Group	n	$\bar{X}$	s	n	$\bar{X}$	s	n	$\bar{X}$	s
E	39	51.1	31.4	64	28.9	29.9	44	72.3	8.5
C	29	54.2	31.6	47	31.5	33.7	44	72.6	8.1

*Descriptions of the instructional approaches employed by the teachers are given in the appendix.

Table 2. ANCOVA for Three Outcome Measures in Study I

Source	Spanish Reading Comprehension		English Reading Comprehension		Affective[a] Measure	
	ν	F	ν	F	ν	F
Method (M)	1	.78	1	.07	1	.80
Teacher (T)	2	.70	2	.31	3	.11
M X T	2	.69	2	.74	3	3.28*
Pupils:MT	49	(229)[b]	99	(124)[b]	39	(28)[b]

*$p < .05$

[a]On the affective measure only the pretest was used as the covariate.

[b]Value in parenthesis is adjusted mean square within cells.

Study II

Study II was conducted in Chandler High School. The school is situated in a middle-income area; 25 percent of the students attending the school are Hispanic, the majority of which are from a low-income area.

As a part of the high school's reading program all sophomores who received a grade-equivalent score of 7.5 or below on the California Achievement Test and all juniors and seniors who scored 9.0 or below must be enrolled in reading improvement classes for fifty-five minutes daily. All students in these classes were provided with at least fifty-five minutes a week of free reading time.

At the beginning of the school year all students took the Nelson Reading Test (level C) as part of the school's testing program. The Hispanic students also took CTBS Español and the affective measure as in Study I.

The experiment continued for seven months at which time, the English and Spanish reading tests and the affective measure were readministered.

As in Study I, only teachers having both E and C classes were employed in the analysis to control the teacher factor. The subjects for this study were approximately fifty-two Hispanic high school students for group C and fifty-two for group E who were enrolled in reading improvement classes (grades 10 through 12). Only those students for whom both pretest and posttest scores were available were used in the analyses. The final n's are much smaller than the numbers above due to mobility, absenteeism, and the school's policy of transferring students whose English reading skills improved substantially into the regular curriculum.

The teachers were all Anglo with a median number of teaching experience of approximately nine years.

Results

The adjusted posttest means for the four dependent variables in Study II are given in Table 3. The results from the ANCOVA are given in Table 4. As in Study I, none of the E-C differences was statistically significant. Two of

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Tables 3 & 4 about here
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the method-by-teacher interactions were reliable. On the Spanish reading test E-C differences varied greatly among the teachers, showing the method differences depended greatly on the particular teacher involved. This conclusion also applies to the affective measure, but the pattern of differences was less pronounced.

Table 3. Adjusted Posttest Means for Study II

	Spanish RC			English RC			English Voc.			Affective		
Group	n	$\bar{X}$	s	n	$\bar{X}$	s	n	$\bar{X}$	s	n	$\bar{X}$	s
E	16	36.1	36.3	18	48.5	27.8	18	29.9	16.9	33	75.8	7.5
C	14	33.1	34.7	21	50.8	20.5	21	31.4	18.9	28	76.2	8.0

Table 4. ANCOVA for Outcome Measures in Study II.

	Spanish RC		English RC		English Voc.		Affective[a]	
Source	ν	F	ν	F	ν	F	ν	F
Method (M)	1	1.53	1	.01	1	.72	1	3.88
Teacher (T)	2	1.72	2	.89	2	2.13	2	1.33
M X T	2	8.49**	2	.22	2	1.00	2	3.60*
Pupils:MT	21	(379)[b]	28	(391.5)[b]	30	(287)[b]	26	(31)[b]

*p < .05

**p < .01

[a]On the affective measure only the pretest was used as the covariate.

[b]Value in parenthesis is adjusted mean square within cells.

Discussion

Great difficulties were encountered in attempting to implement the E strategy and materials into the curriculum. A few teachers appeared to lack enthusiasm for the project and operated their E classes in a perfunctory manner. The major difficulty appears to result with the students themselves, all of whom are Hispanics of low English reading ability. The teachers reported that most of their U.S.-born Hispanic students were not interested in reading in Spanish and rarely, if ever, used the specially provided reading material in Spanish, even though the materials were readily available and were periodically brought to their attention.

The response of the Hispanics born in Mexico was quite different, however. They often read the Spanish materials provided and eagerly awaited the weekly El Sol newspaper.

The responses of the U.S-born Hispanics tended to be apathetic and passively hostile. In fact, many of the CTBS Español posttest scores in Study II are obviously invalid due to lack of cooperation. (For example, scores went from above 50% on the pretest to near 0% on the posttest.)

Another source of confounding in the studies resulted from the "spill-over" of E reading materials to C students (mainly from Mexico) who wanted access to these materials. Several of these students read regularly in Spanish.

The principal observation and conclusion from this study is parenthetical to its original intent, namely, the importance of providing interesting Spanish reading materials to high school Hispanics migrating to the U.S.

Summary

Two studies were conducted in which high-interest reading materials in Spanish with a wide range of readability were provided to Hispanic students in remedial reading classes at two Arizona high schools which have a substantial proportion of Hispanic students. Comparable Hispanic students in other remedial reading classes taught by the same teachers served as the control group. Spanish reading, English reading, and affective (reading attitude-academic self-concept) measures were employed as pretests and posttests. Analyses of covariance failed to detect any significant difference in the E and C means, although some method-by-teacher interactions were evident on both the Spanish reading and affective measure.

Classroom observation and teacher interviews revealed that U.S.-born Hispanics had little interest and rarely made use of the Spanish materials, but recent Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. enjoyed the materials and used them extensively.

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Appendix

Teachers of Experimental and Control Groups

Study I

Teacher 1 is a male Anglo with one year of teaching experience. He taught three C groups (periods 1, 5 and 7) and two E groups (periods 3 and 6). He emphasized English comprehension, vocabulary skills and survival skills such as writing job applications to his C and E groups. In addition, he pointed out the Spanish reading materials during free reading time to his E group every two weeks. A few of his E students occasionally looked at the Spanish materials. He reported that several would respond: "I can't read Spanish. How do you expect me to read those materials?"

Teacher 2 is a bilingual female Hispanic with seven years of teaching experience. She taught one C group (period 3) and one E group (period 2). She taught English comprehension, vocabulary, spelling and structural analysis to both her E and C groups. With her C group she got into the literary aspects of novels, however, with her E group she had to emphasize more basic English comprehension and vocabulary skills. Only three of her E students read regularly in Spanish. She stated that she "found it difficult to push the Spanish reading materials at home and that this may have been a reason for their lack of interest.

Teacher 3 is a female Anglo with ten years of teaching experience. She taught two C groups (periods 5 and 6) and three E groups (periods 1, 2 and 7). She taught content reading, science words, outlining and vocabulary words to both her E and C groups. In addition she exposed her E groups to the Spanish reading materials during free reading time. She reported that only a few of her E students were interested in reading comic books or body building magazines in Spanish. She stated that "remedial reading students will not, on their own, voluntarily, read in Spanish."

Teacher 4 is a female Anglo with five years teaching experience. She taught one C group (period 5) and one E group (period 2). She emphasized English vocabulary, comprehension and literary skills to both her E and C groups. In addition she provided the Spanish reading materials to her E group during their free reading time. She stated that she "felt bad about the students' negative attitude regarding the Spanish reading materials but there was nothing we could do about it." Only two of her E students were interested in occasionally reading magazines in Spanish.

Study II

Teacher 1 is a male Anglo with nine years of teaching experience. He taught two C groups (periods four and six) and two E groups (periods one and five). He emphasized English comprehension, vocabulary and reading for enjoyment in all his classes. He encouraged his E groups every week to read Spanish materials, however, only three Hispanic students read regularly in Spanish. He believes that "books in Spanish don't do much for most of the students. Only the minority who come from Mexico are interested in them." He stated that "Mexican-American students are embarrassed about the books in Spanish. They don't want to look at them -- they stay far away from them. Thus, they might be a negative force."

Teacher 2 is a female Anglo with seven years of teaching experience. She taught two C groups (periods two and six) and one E group (period three). Her main concern was to create an interest in reading in all her students and to increase their English vocabulary. She reported that four or five Hispanic students in her E group read most of the time in Spanish during the first semester. However, none read in Spanish during the second semester. Four Hispanic students in her C classes regularly requested a newspaper in Spanish "to take home to

their parents."

Teacher 3 is a male Anglo with ten years of teaching experience. He taught two C groups (periods second and four) and three E groups (periods one, three and five). He emphasized English reading comprehension, vocabulary and study skills as well as individual and recreational reading in all his classes. He made all his E groups aware of the reading materials in Spanish once a week and encouraged those who were interested to use them. He reported that only six Hispanic students (who had come from Mexico within the last few years) read regularly magazines or comic books in Spanish. Otherwise, he observed a limited use of the reading materials in Spanish. He commented on the unattractiveness of the books in Spanish. He reported that one C girl read regularly in Spanish.